

YOUR HOME



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Simply the best

All the hard work in creating a luxurious green home has paid off for one couple as their new take on a traditional build is declared the finest holiday home in Europe, writes Susan Welsh



It's not just Linda and Paul Brown who think their home in Lewis is simply the best – The European Holiday Home Association thinks so too. At a

glitzy event in Brussels last month, their home, The Lewis Longhouse, was named 'Best Green Holiday Home' in the European Holiday Home Awards 2016.

The awards were set up to showcase the very best properties in the European Holiday Home industry and the Brown's spectacular home was selected to be

the best, from dozens of other holiday homes from right across Europe. It's a huge feather in the cap for the couple who completed the building of

their house in Back, just north of Stornoway four years ago. It sits on an old croft that has been in Linda's family for generations. And this is

not the first time the stunning house has earned high praise as early last year it picked up the first Green Tourism GOLD award on Lewis and was the first home in the Outer Hebrides to be awarded an 'AA' EPC environmental rating.

Modestly, Linda said she and Paul were "quite chuffed" to win the most recent award.

"We aren't eco warriors. What was important to us was that the house was as efficient as possible in terms of energy and the environment, and that it was as low cost as we could make it to run. It also had to be sturdy and durable to cope with weather conditions in Lewis."

Linda, 52, was born in Stornoway, then lived in Inverness for several years before doing most of her growing up in East Calder near Livingston, but every holiday was spent on Lewis where her grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins lived.

She met Yorkshireman Paul when they worked for BP in Yorkshire – she worked in communications while he was involved in the chemical side of

things. "The idea of building a house on Lewis had been in my head for years. A piece of the croft was passed to my dad years ago and from then I had the idea that I'd love to build there and have a stake back to the islands. Every now and then I'd dip into self-build magazines but it wasn't until 2010 that Paul and I were in a position to do something about it.

"I run my own communications company and spend a lot of time overseas so building the house in Lewis while living in England or working abroad was always going to be something of a challenge.

"We didn't want a kit house but something a wee bit different that would fit within the landscape. After speaking with several architects we chose Gordon Anderson Associates in Stornoway as we shared similar views and needed somebody locally to project manage it.

"That said, Paul and I were very hands on and involved in the project. Either one or both of us were up every month which wasn't easy as at the time I was working a lot in South Africa. During the day I'd



Linda and Paul Brown inside The Lewis Longhouse



work with clients then in the evening spend time choosing everything from door handles to lightbulbs for the house in Lewis which resulted in thousands of e-mails between Paul and myself," said Linda.

The soil on the plot was broken in January 2012 and work began transforming a grassy field into the home of their dreams. Getting materials to Lewis also proved challenging so they sourced many things, such as the bathroom, kitchen and white goods themselves then had them delivered to Inverness and from there, delivered by a man with a van to the croft.

They also took advantage of new technologies and materials, to recreate a vision for the traditional

Lewis longhouse for the 21st century. The design has the latest PV panels, air-source heat pump and high-performance glazing, local Harris Tweed and local art throughout the interiors and local windblown timbers from Lewis Castle grounds in internal fixtures. By the start of 2013, the house was complete.

"Although we don't live in the house all year round, it was never built as a holiday home but designed, built and equipped as a second home for us, that's the big difference," said Linda. "It could not be more different to the house we live in at the moment which is a former Victorian vicarage on the edge of the New Forest in Hampshire.

"I love walking into the Longhouse because of the

feeling of light and openness you get. There's big windows along the front offering big views which makes it feel like you are part of the outdoors. We spend as much time as we can here and love it.

"As with all self-builds we spent much more than we budgeted for, but would I do it again? In a heartbeat," said Linda.

The Lewis Longhouse is now a luxury five-star rated holiday home with a contemporary twist and stylish interiors and available for self-catering lets when guests can see for themselves that an "eco" home can also be a luxurious one.

To learn more about the house visit www.lewislonghouse.com